

International Affairs & Foreign Policy

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The Middle East

We're now at a crossroads in our relations with the Middle East. Americans understand more than ever the urgency of dismantling existing terrorist networks in the region and bringing about peace. In this effort the partnership between the U.S. and Israel is indispensable. Rep. Eshoo has consistently supported the relationship between the two countries, and has been a consistent supporter of aid to Israel. Continued U.S. aid to Israel is critical and sends the clearest message that we stand with her.

Since coming to Congress, Rep. Eshoo has visited Israel and the Middle East several times, most recently in March of 2005. Following that trip she reported a renewed sense of hope in the region that wasn't felt in previous visits. The events of the last several months have dramatically altered the landscape in the Middle East in ways that are not yet fully understood, but despite the uncertainty, reasons to be hopeful remain.

Hamas's success in the January Palestinian parliamentary elections is an alarming development. Hamas is an organization elected in the freest and fairest election the Arab world has ever seen, but one that is listed as a terrorist group all over the world. In the run-up to the Palestinian election, Rep. Eshoo voiced her concern about Hamas's potential for success among several of her colleagues in Congress, and she voted in favor of House Resolution 575, legislation asserting that terrorist organizations, such as Hamas, should not participate in Palestinian elections until such organizations recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, cease incitement of violence, condemn terrorism, and disarm and dismantle their terrorist infrastructure. Hamas has yet to take these necessary steps, and until they do, U.S. foreign policy toward the Palestinian people is going to be greatly imperiled.

It has become clear since the elections that Hamas's success was in large part a result of deep-seeded frustration within the Palestinian people for the years of incompetence, short-sightedness, and outright corruption on the part of the Fatah party. It's a lesson that elected officials should take to heart the world over, and one area where U.S. foreign policy can, and should, be more effective.

Despite the recent uncertainty, the fact remains that in the last year the level of violence between Israelis and Palestinians has fallen, and fallen quite a bit. Some of the major players have changed recently, but overall the desire for a fresh start and an end to the conflict still prevails in the region.

Iran

Iran remains a dangerous actor in the Middle East, and Rep. Eshoo has been firm in her belief that more needs to be done to keep the repressive and dangerous Iranian regime from obtaining nuclear weapons of mass destruction, as well as force them to halt their support of terrorism by exerting outside pressure to promote democratic reform without military intervention.

Rep. Eshoo is a cosponsor of the H.R. 282, the Iran Freedom Support Act, legislation which passed the House in April 2006 by an overwhelming vote of 397-21. Under the Iran Freedom Support Act, U.S. sanctions imposed on the Iranian regime would be strengthened in certain areas until and unless Iran curtails its sponsorship of international terrorism and abandons its nuclear program. The bill also provides assistance to pro-democracy forces and groups in Iran, and funds independent media broadcasts into Iran.

Representative Eshoo has long been an outspoken opponent of preemptive and unilateral military intervention, however, she is vocal in insisting renegade regimes in the Middle East cease their support for terrorism and their efforts to further destabilize the region. Only a broad international diplomatic push will accomplish these objectives, and the U.S. must remain a committed leader in this effort.

Progress is being made. In an extraordinary show of global unity the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in February approved a tough resolution on Iran by a vote of 27-3. Under the IAEA resolution, Iran must demonstrate "full and sustained suspension of nuclear-related activities;" reconsider the construction of a heavy-water research reactor; allow inspections of nuclear facilities; and permit "access to individuals and documents" related to their illegal nuclear program. Failure to comply with these measures will clear the way for immediate action by the U.N. Security Council.

Darfur

Sudan, geographically the largest country in Africa, has been ravaged by intermittent civil war for over four decades. An estimated 2 million people have died over the last 20 years due to both war-related causes and famine, and millions more have been displaced from their homes. Since February 2003, a dispute over territorial issues and the reigning government's desire to implement Islamic law in the Darfur region of the country has escalated into a critical humanitarian crisis. In the last three years, an estimated 2.5 million people have been displaced and nearly 70% of Darfur's villages have been razed. While there are no reliable estimates of the number of people killed as a result of the conflict, some observers project that it could be as high as 400,000.

Rep. Eshoo has been at the forefront of efforts in the House of Representatives to cosponsor and pass legislation condemning the atrocities in Darfur and appropriately labeling them "genocide." Both Houses of Congress have concurred with this assessment, but little Congress has done has been effective in stopping the killings and displacement. We need to do more, and come up with new methods to target, and stop those perpetuating the violence.

Rep. Eshoo is a cosponsor of H.R. 3127, the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, which passed the House by a vote of 416-3 in April 2006. This tough legislation goes after the individuals both inside and outside of the Sudanese Government who are responsible for the ongoing bloodshed. It directs the President to seize the assets of and refuse future visas to any individual (or their family members) responsible for acts of genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity in Sudan. It also forbids any U.S. port from accepting any goods or cargo from Sudanese ships should the

Sudanese Government fail to take steps to resolve the crisis. Finally, to give military protection for victims on the ground, H.R. 3127 authorizes the President to provide assistance to reinforce the deployment and operations of an expanded African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), and directs the President to instruct the U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO to advocate reinforcement of AMIS, upon request of the African Union.

In February 2006 Rep. Eshoo voted also in favor of the Capuano Amendment to the FY2006 Supplemental Appropriations bill for Iraq and Other International Activities, which added \$50 million in funding for peacekeeping efforts in Sudan. This additional funding brought the total contained in the bill to \$173 million, and will allow the AMIS efforts to expand to more effectively protect civilians and ensure regional security.

To build on these efforts, Rep. Eshoo has also cosponsored House Resolution 723, legislation calling on the President to advocate for the deployment of a U.N. peacekeeping force to Darfur and for NATO to implement an interim protection force for civilians on the ground. America cannot stand idly by once again while genocide, the greatest crime against humanity, is carried out, and we cannot succeed without multilateral intervention and support. While visiting the Middle East last year as part of a high-level Congressional Delegation, Rep. Eshoo urged President Mubarak of neighboring Egypt to get more seriously and actively involved in addressing the issue. More governments in the region need to lend their support.

More can also be done closer to home to bring change. Rep. Eshoo joined colleagues in January 2006 in writing to the Regents of the University of California (UC) urging them to develop a plan to substantially divest their financial interests from the government of Sudan. As one of the world's largest public universities, UC has a huge financial endowment which includes over \$4 billion invested in foreign companies, some of which do business in Sudan. Substantially divesting from these interests will send a clear and important message that the ongoing acts of genocide must cease if the Sudanese government wishes to maintain an economic relationship with the outside world. A similar effort in the 1980's helped to bring about the end of apartheid in South Africa.

Too many times in the past century the world has stood by while an endangered minority was faced with extinction. Whether in Armenia, the German concentration camps, the killing fields of Cambodia, or the red clay hills of Rwanda, the world's collective horror arrives too late, and we're haunted with the failure to act sooner. It's been three years since the crisis in Darfur began. It's time for decisive action to put an end to these acts of barbarity.